

Good Morning. My name is Tommy Hennig, and I am one of the co-captains of the William and Mary Fencing Team.

First, on behalf of the fencing team, I'd like to extend our deepest sympathies to the Gutenberg Family. You've been in our thoughts for a long time, and you'll be there for many days to come. We are all honored by your presence here today.

I'd also like to thank the Administration and the College as a whole for the wonderful support they've showed us during this time. It really has reinforced that the College is one big family, and we stand by one another during difficult times.

I know many of you knew Ben in different capacities. Some of you knew him as a friend, some of you as a classmate, some as a hall mate, and a lucky few of you as family. We at the fencing team shared a special bond with Ben; he was our teammate, and I'd like to share today what made him so good at that.

To be a good teammate, you have to simultaneously be a student of the game and a teacher of it, a friend and a competitor. It takes a special person to embody these opposing roles, but in the few months that I knew Ben he demonstrated he had a fine understanding of the balance.

I first saw Ben's talent as a teacher. After the first few days of practice when everyone had gotten to know each other, I saw Ben helping out his fellow students, all but one of whom was older than him. And not only was he giving good tactical advice, he was presenting it in a way that everyone on the team could understand. Ben just had a great way of communicating with people and explaining to them what they needed to know. You can ask any coach; it is easy to know what your student needs to do, the trick is getting your student to understand it. I'm the senior co-captain of the fencing team, and I found myself turning to Ben to help clarify concepts that I just couldn't explain to the rest of the team.

- Soon after I got the opportunity to know Ben as a student. On the rare occasion when I saw Ben doing something that he might be able to improve, he was immediately willing to listen to any advice I might give. I can remember clearly in practice that if I told him to correct something he would do it right the first time, and continue to do it correctly for the next two hours. He was good enough to understand anything you told him, but he was humble enough, and driven enough, to know that there were things he could improve.

-That drive became immediately apparent the first time I competed against Ben. I'm a fairly accomplished, nationally ranked fencer, and in our first bout I won by one point, in our second he beat me. And I'm not trying to tell you that Ben was a flawless fencer. He was human, and at time I know he got nervous and intimidated. But his strength was in moving past that fear and continuing to analyze the bout. He was always thinking about a way to stay in or get ahead in a bout. And not once did I see him quit. He was the

consummate gentleman when he fenced, but he had that fire that allowed him to be so special on the strip.

Lastly, and most importantly, we got to know Ben as a friend. He was quiet for the first few weeks of practice, but once he got comfortable around us, which takes quite a lot of courage in an of itself, he showed us his true colors. He showed us that great sense of humor. He had a love of pirates and video games and many other things that we could all relate to. But most importantly, he showed us what a great person he was. Ben genuinely cared about everyone on the team. I can remember early in the year, when the freshmen decided to get together and make dinner for the team, one of the freshmen nearly burned the food, and Ben gracefully kind of stepped in and took over for him. And I pulled him aside and told him later, “you know, good job saving the food, good leadership skills”. And he told me “I didn’t care about the spaghetti, I really just didn’t want the other guy to get made fun of.” I think this epitomizes Ben. Any of us would have stepped in to keep the food from burning, but Ben did it for the right reasons, for the altruistic reasons. And that’s just who Ben was.

I know I speak for the whole fencing team when I say that Ben will be sorely missed for a long time. We’ll miss knowing that everyday we’ll have a talented student, but a greater teacher. A phenomenal competitor, but clearly a much better friend. We’ll all miss him, but I hope we take strength from knowing that we’ve all been made not just better fencers and better teammates, but better people by knowing Ben. It was a pleasure and an honor to know Ben Gutenberg. Thank you.

*Tommy Henning, fencing team co-captain*